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July 7 2010 Meeting Minutes

Arlington Human Rights Commission Minutes – Final **July 7, 2010**

Present: Sheri Baron, Marlissa Briggett, Vita Cohen, Stacy Davison, Gary Horowitz, Chair Nancy Rhoads, Marlene Schultz, Bill Shea, Nancy Sweeney, Suzie Talukdar

Absent: Nick Minton, Christine Carney, Jorge Loayza

Open Forum – School Committee Members, Chair Joseph Curro and Member Judson Pierce, came to discuss the Pledge of Allegiance issue that has recently come before the committee. Currently there is no policy for having students recite the Pledge each day before classes begin. A student has researched the laws of the Commonwealth and put forth a strong argument for the committee to review and he asked them to consider setting forth a policy that would enable the Pledge to be recited each day for those students who wish to participate. After much discussion a vote was taken. The result was a tie vote, which is considered a ‘no’ vote. Much disappointment was displayed after this vote and threats have been made to committee members that has been cause for concern among them and the Arlington Police Department. After much discussion Chair Rhoads reinforced that saying the Pledge is a right but the beliefs of all students must be considered and suggested moving this issue to the classroom and using it as an educational opportunity. The School Committee will continue this discussion at their upcoming meetings and in hopes to having a policy in place by the time schools reopen in September.

Review of May/June Minutes – Minutes accepted as amended.

Review of Subcommittees –

Chair Rhoads began discussion of the ‘subcommittee goal and action report’ distributed last month that members were asked to consider since our last meeting. All reviewed the outline of Schools, Policies & Procedures, Community Outreach, Dialogues and Budget and committee members signed on to their committees of expertise. Many ideas came from this discussion but now the need is to work on execution of these ideas while trying to develop other ways for the AHRC to reach out to others. It was decided to leave this discussion and return to it as the meeting goes on.

Incidents and Complaints –

#1 - Chair Rhoads has spoken with the principal regarding the latest Brackett School incident and the parents were pleased to know that the HRC was notified.

#2 - The chair of the condo association called the victim of the swastika incident in June. Ms. Stein had already contacted the victim and wanted this incident to be noted as a hate incident. Chair Rhoads needs clarification on what the difference is between a crime and an incident and what the role of the Chair is in this regard. Commissioner Cohen will follow up.

Subcommittee Reports –

Dialogues – programs for the new year are forthcoming

Schools – Chair Rhoads reported further on the course of events that brought about the recent Pledge issues that have come before the School Committee and the reasons why the APD is actively going to pursue their investigation. The members each spoke of their concerns and their suggestions on how to work within the town more effectively. Questions like: how do we get to know our neighbors better – how do we break down the wall of communication – how do we agree to disagree peacefully? Commissioner Briggett will work on a program.

Policies and Procedures – n/a

Community Outreach – n/a

Other Business

Chair Rhoads read a letter from a student **thanking the Commission** for books donated to the Ottoson School Library in his name, in gratitude for his speaking up in the bullying incident.

A **donation** in the amount of \$100 has been made to the Brackett School **OPC**.

Town Day – Chair Rhoads has purchased needed supplies and the event plan will be discussed at our next meeting.

Motion to adjourn was made and approved.

Submitted by:

Marylynn Carnell

Staff Assistant